



Representing the communities of Agoura, Agoura Hills, Calabasas, Encino, Hidden Hills, Lake Sherwood, Malibu, Oak Park, Pacific Palisades, Port Hueneme, portions of Sherman Oaks, portions of Oxnard, Santa Monica, Tarzana, Topanga, portions of Westlake Village, and Woodland Hills

January-February 2010

Governor Releases 2010-11 State Budget

California's budget process starts in January every year when the Governor submits his budget proposal to the Legislature. Unlike the Federal government, California's constitution requires that our state budget be balanced. And although we did balance the budget last year by making deep cuts in vital services that could not be avoided given the Governor's absolute refusal to address the revenue side of the budget, our fiscal crisis has only worsened. This year California starts out with a projected \$18.9 billion deficit. The Governor's proposal is based on a \$19.9 billion shortfall to include a \$1 billion reserve.

It relies mostly on reductions, but also assumes a large increase in Federal funding of \$6.8 billion plus another \$1 billion in flexibility in In Home Social Services and education funding. The state's nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office report, however, has found expectation of all the federal relief assumed by the Governor unrealistic, and calls the odds of Washington agreeing "almost nonexistent." In spite of this, the Governor has said that if California doesn't receive the almost \$8 billion in Federal dollars, he will then push to make up that money by eliminating the welfare-to-work program, In Home Social Services, and Healthy Families.

We will see cuts that would begin to threaten the long-term viability and strength of our great state. More than half of the current deficit is the result of accounting gimmicks and reductions that the Governor demanded last year that were either overturned, or are currently stalled, by court action. We can't engage in more fiscal fiction when so much is at stake.

Here are just a few of the Governor's proposals for 2010-11:

- Manipulating the Proposition 98 funding guarantee to our schools in such a way that it would actually cut schools by as much as \$2.4 billion.
- Redirecting gas tax money that voters approved long ago for needed transportation and transit improvements.
- Zeroing out the entire budget for California's state parks, and "restoring" those funds by assuming that the Legislature will break a decades-old promise to the public that bans all off-shore oil drilling. The Governor proposes to use that new oil revenue to backfill state parks.

One thing is very clear. We cannot continue to budget in this reactive way based on the crisis at hand. We must get to serious work on a new long-term budget strategy that matches our 21st century economy instead of our current budgeting which still sits on the rusty foundation of a 20th century retail economy that no longer exists. Every year that we don't do this is another opportunity lost.

Race to the Top Update

In December, I reported to you on my efforts in the Assembly and as Chair of the Education Committee to craft legislation that would put California in the strongest possible position in our application for federal Race to the Top (RTTT) education funds. After four informational hearings, two legislative hearings and many 'round the clock hours over the holidays, the Legislature completed its work in January in ample time to apply for the first round of RTTT funding.



Left to right: Speaker Karen Bass, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, Chairwoman Julia Brownley

The Legislature enacted sweeping education reforms that include:

- A new Academic Standards Commission to create new language arts and math content standards that will incorporate national common core standards.
 - Requiring the state Superintendent of Public Schools and State Board of Education to put a greater emphasis on science, technology, engineering and math.
- Data collection system changes so that data can be shared among grades K-12, higher education and the Employment Development Department to improve instruction, and to improve decision making on the state and local levels.
 - The ability to use student achievement data in evaluating teachers with local bargaining units and agreement of the local school board.
 - Giving parents in 75 low-achieving schools the right to demand one of four reorganization models if at least 50 percent of the parents agree.
 - Allowing students in the lowest-performing schools to attend a higher-performing school elsewhere in or outside the district, subject to available space.
 - Requiring that the persistently lowest achieving schools in the state (schools that have chronically been the very lowest) make significant reforms that may include closing the school or replacing its staff.
 - Establishing a mentor schools program that will team low achieving schools with schools that have successfully made the transition from low achieving to a higher achieving status.

The reforms give California two advantages. First, they will boost the state's chances of winning \$700 million or more in one-time funds for education spread over four years, money that is all the more valuable in tough economic times. Second, they will help prepare California for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, commonly known as No Child Left Behind, which likely will require reforms similar to Race to the Top guidelines, thus putting us one step ahead in that process.

During the process of reaching a compromise on ways to improve schools, the reforms were split into two bills. One of those bills is mostly made up of proposals that were contained in my original bill. The second bill, I could not support. My original bill had consensus among stakeholders, keeping in the spirit of the competition's guidelines. Unfortunately, that consensus was lost in the effort to gain approval of enough lawmakers for passage of both bills, and was compounded by what the governor would or would not sign.

We'll hear in April whether California is awarded grant money in the first phase of the competition. If not, we'll have another shot in a subsequent phase. We'll also see how various elements of the reforms work and whether anything needs adjustment. This will be made easier because of an evaluation of these changes that was put into law at my insistence.

All in all, I was heartened by the people who came and testified and were so passionate in their searches for ways to boost student achievement levels, to close the achievement gap, and overall to get all California students ready to realize the bright futures that each one of them deserves.



Expo Phase 2 to Santa Monica Approved

Last week, the Exposition Construction Authority Board of Directors voted unanimously to approve the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for the Expo Phase 2 Light Rail to Santa Monica. The hearing room was packed with community members and representatives from organizations and elected officials and after several hours of public comment and debate the hearing was capped by a 6-0 vote in favor of certifying the report. I was glad to offer my formal support for this vitally important project and look forward to construction getting underway soon with an expected completion date in 2015.

During the lengthy public scoping process leading up to last weeks Board approval, the Expo Construction Authority had worked with the individuals, cities, stakeholders and organizations in the affected communities, and had completed the FEIR that includes many improvements that had been brought forth. I believe that this FEIR presents the most balanced, safe and efficient approach to bringing this much needed line to Santa Monica.

This long-awaited line could begin construction as early as this year with rider service beginning in 2015, so keeping the project on schedule is of the utmost importance so that it can begin providing the high capacity transit that will relieve commuters on the congested I-10 among many of its needed benefits.

Some of the benefits Expo Phase 2 are:

- It will create new jobs as soon as this year.
- Links Downtown to Santa Monica, increasing regional mobility.
- Brings improved air quality and energy efficiencies.
- Provides service and linkages to numerous K-12 schools and college and university campuses along the alignment

More specific info about the project is available from the Expo Construction Authority at www.buildexpo.org.

Future of Ormond Beach Wetlands Tied to Oxnard General Plan Update

State law requires all cities to have comprehensive and long-range General Plans that govern physical development. It must be updated regularly.

Half of the City of Oxnard is in the 41st Assembly District, and one of the most environmentally-fragile areas is along the coast at Ormond Beach in my district. In the past, Ormond Beach was a place where industrial and manufacturing uses were located, with those decisions being made by prior city councils in times when environmental and ecological considerations had much less priority.

Oxnard has been in the process of updating its 2010 General Plan, with a planning horizon that goes out 20 years to the year 2030. Decisions made on the Land Use Element of the General Plan will be of critical importance to the future of the restoration and preservation of the historic Ormond Beach wetlands. The California State Coastal Conservancy is the lead agency in directing voter-approved bond funds toward such acquisitions.

The Ormond Beach Taskforce assembled 20 years ago to raise awareness of the value and rarity of these wetlands and of the need to begin looking longer term at opportunities as they came along. The goal would be to begin acquiring key parcels to ultimately assemble a minimum of 750 acres needed for a fully functioning and restored wetland at Ormond. The Taskforce became the voice of the Oxnard community to help guide the Coastal Conservancy in crafting an ultimate vision for this beautiful coastal wetland. Unfortunately, the area is still burdened by unsightly industrial uses and power plants that are inconsistent with restoration.

In California, 90% of our original wetlands have already been lost – mostly to agriculture and development. Those remaining are ecologically complex and have value far beyond just protection of habitat for threatened and endangered species. Coastal wetlands are important spawning and nursery areas. Wetlands are natural assimilators of pollution and act to purify the water. They are part of the food chain for both resident and migrating species. They are places of recreation and refuge for visitors, and provide important educational opportunities for nature observation and scientific study. We must preserve what is left, and work toward the restoration of impaired wetlands back to what they should be.

On January 21, the Taskforce took a formal position on the city's 2030 General Plan. It would recommend to the City Council that with respect to adoption of the General Plan and the Final Environmental Impact Report that the Council take no action that is inconsistent with the Task force's Vision Plan and that of the Coastal Conservancy "Wetland Restoration Plan #2 unconstrained (2U)." The Taskforce noted the presence of the contaminated, and now abandoned, Halaco foundry site directly on the water's edge as inconsistent. I joined in that position, along with State Senator Fran Pavley, the Sierra Club, the Environmental Defense Center, Ventura Audubon, and a long list of other environmental groups.

It is my hope that we can now begin to phase out industrial and manufacturing uses entirely at Ormond Beach, and to focus new attention on the restoration of this magnificent coastal area to what it was once considered – "the Jewel of Oxnard."



The Fight to End Human Trafficking

Too often, some of the most despicable societal acts remain hidden from public view and awareness. One of these is human trafficking. Women and very young children in particular are victimized in terrible ways, but these crimes are also difficult for law enforcement to uncover and to prosecute.



Assemblywoman Brownley (far right) testifies in Assembly Public Safety Committee

Last Session I carried AB 2810, to create a training program for law enforcement officers in California, and to develop guidelines to help them in responding to situations of possible human trafficking. The training would include information on how to identify and communicate with victims, and on therapeutically appropriate investigative techniques.

Although the bill passed in both the Assembly and the Senate, it was disappointing to have

the Governor then veto it. The good news, however, is that the Commission recently decided to move ahead with the training program on its own, seeing it as an important tool in their fight against human trafficking.

This will be combined with another bill I carried in 2008 that now requires law enforcement to humanely question individuals charged with crimes like prostitution to help determine whether the accused is actually a victim of human trafficking. It also prohibits law enforcement from releasing information that would identify such victims without their consent when their safety is at stake or the investigation could be compromised.

Warning to Businesses of Latest Scam

The Secretary of State has put out an alert on deceptive solicitations that businesses may be receiving that imply that companies have to go through a private third-party vendor and pay an exorbitant fee in order to file official documents with the Secretary of State's office.

Some of these involve "Statement of Information" documents that appear at first glance to be official. They require a fee and threaten fines for non-compliance. The most recent mailing implies that a company must pay \$495 to a private vendor in order to file a dissolution document with the Secretary of State.

None of this is true and most of the applicable statutory fees do not exceed \$25.

A Customer Alert has been posted at www.sos.ca.gov/business/be/alert-misleading-solicitations.htm. It also provides information on how businesses can contact the Attorney General if they have already been victimized or received one of the solicitations. The Secretary of State is working with the Attorney General to go after anyone who sends out such a misleading solicitation.

Another Decade. Another Census.

Why is it so important to know what our country's population is? In California alone, the census helps determine how \$435 billion in Federal funds covering more than 170 different programs are distributed. Because the 2000 census reportedly undercounted an estimated 535,000 Californians, we are losing \$1.2 billion annually. For each person not counted, California loses \$1,300.



Photo Credit: U.S. Census Bureau, Public Information Office

In March of 2010, census forms will be delivered to every residence in the United States and Puerto Rico. When you receive yours, just answer the 10 short questions and mail the form back in the postage-paid envelope provided. If you don't mail the form back, you may receive a visit from a census taker who will ask you the questions from the form. All personal data you provide is protected under federal law.

You can help be a part of this important count in ways beyond completing your own form. **Over 1,000 people will be hired** in the area starting very soon. Field work can be part-time, evenings and weekends, and pays \$17/hour. There are also office jobs that pay a little less. The census hopes that when the time comes, neighbors will be ready to help count neighbors.

Call the toll-free jobs hotline at: **1-866-861-2010**

For more information, visit the census website: <http://2010.census.gov>.



Source: weredrawthelines.ca.gov

Redistricting Commission Needs You

A little over a year ago, voters passed Proposition 11, which will change the way that political district boundaries are drawn. Based on each census, political boundaries must be adjusted to insure that the population in all districts remains equal. For many years, the Legislature redrew the districts. But Proposition 11 changes that. A newly-created "Citizens Redistricting Commission" will handle the job, and the California Redistricting Commission is now accepting applications to serve up until February 16.

Actual work will begin in January 2011 and continue to September 15, 2011. Prop. 11 provides that ultimately 14 commissioners will be selected randomly: 5 Democrats, 5 Republicans, and 4 from other parties. To serve, 1) you must be registered to vote in California, 2) your party registration must have remained the same since November 20, 2005, and 3) you must have actually voted in at least 2 of the last 3 general elections.

This should be a fascinating process. If you are interested in learning more, go to www.wedrawthelines.ca.gov. You can apply online.



Looking for Free Cash for College?

Cal Grants are one of the smartest ways to get cash for college. For starters, it's money you don't have to pay back. If you're a graduating high school senior or recent graduate; meet academic, financial and eligibility requirements; and

submit two forms by March 2, you may receive a Cal Grant. Cal Grants can provide up to \$9,700 a year to pay for college expenses at any qualifying California college, university or career or technical school in California. Depending on which Cal Grant you get, the money can be used for tuition, room and board, even books and pencils. The best part is that it's yours to keep and you don't have to repay it.

For more information and applications, go to www.calgrants.org. Any Cal Grant award is tentative and subject to final approval of the State Budget Act.

Have a Budding Young Artist With an "InnerSpark?"

The California State Summer School for the Arts ("INNERSPARK") is seeking the most talented high school-aged visual, literary, media and performing artists in California. The 520 teens who are selected through the competitive application process will attend one of the country's premier summer arts institutes on the campus of the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia from July 10 through August 6, 2010. This is a unique opportunity to spend four weeks studying and working with professional artists, writers and performers of national stature. INNERSPARK also provides links to institutions of higher learning, major performing and fine arts organizations, and the film, television and recording industries.



The talented teens who successfully complete the program will receive three units of California State University extended education credit. Students whose families have the means pay a comprehensive charge of \$1,485 to cover room, board and tuition.

The application deadline (postmark) is February 27, 2010. Applications and Financial Aid forms can be downloaded from www.innerspark.us. You can e-mail any questions to application@innerspark.us.

I would love to hear from any student in my district who is able to take advantage of this wonderful program.

Is the State Holding Property You Don't Even Know About?

California is currently in possession of more than \$5.7 billion in unclaimed property belonging to roughly 11.6 million individuals and organizations. The state's Unclaimed Property Law requires holders of property, like banks and insurance companies, to report and deliver such property to the California State Controller's Office. Often a person forgets that a bank account exists, or moves and does not leave a forwarding address, or the forwarding order expires. In some cases, the owner dies and heirs have no idea that the property exists.

To find out if the state is holding money or property for you, go to www.sco.ca.gov and search their Unclaimed Property Database. You may be happily surprised.

Committee and Legislative Appointments

Chair, Assembly Education Committee
Chair, Assembly Education Committee of the 5th Extraordinary Session
Chair, Select Committee on Higher Education in the 21st Century
Chair, Select Committee on Cleanup of Santa Susana Field Laboratory

Member:

Assembly Budget Committee
Assembly Judiciary Committee
Assembly Natural Resources Committee
Budget Subcommittee #1 – Health and Human Services
Budget Subcommittee #2 – Education Finance
Select Committee on Community Colleges
Select Committee on Domestic Violence
Select Committee on Improving State Government
Select Committee on Lowering California's High School Dropout Rates
Joint Select Committee on Reform

Member, State Allocation Board
California Commission on the Status of Women

Legislative Liaison, Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission
Legislative Participant, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy

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